regard has been signed between India and Nepal;

(d) if so, the details of such joint ventures where Indian investment is likely to be made; and

(e) the reaction of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. His Majesty's Government *c£* Nepal have in recent months renewed their invitation to| Indian entrepreneurs to make investments in Nepal.

(b) The invitation is not limited in terms of sectors, but MHGN have specifically identified certain priority sectors for this purpose, namely agro-based industry, tourism, hydro-power and other manufacturing industries (textile mills, readymade garments, leather products, writing and printing papers, newsprint, pharmaceuticals, sugar), as well as service sectors.

(c) No, Sir. Such investment does not require an inter-governmental agreement.

(d) It is not possible to specify joint ventures which Indian entrepreneurs might be interested to explore in Nepal.

(e) The Government's policy is to encourage and facilitate increased economic cooperation with Nepal, including investment in that country, research is the production of alcohol from sugarcane juice.

Zero trade deficit

1376. MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI:
SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Economic Times dated February 26, 1995 captioned 'India may have zero trade deficit in 1997';

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) by when the country's trade deficit at zero point is likely to be achieved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir. No such news-item in the Economic Times dated February 26, 1995 has come to the notice of the Government. However, a similar news item which appeared in the Economic Times dated February 26, 1994 has come to the notice of the Government;

(b) and (c) Exports and imports depend on divergent seis of factors and an exact balance between the two can only be a coincidence. The Government is striving for a sustainable balance of trade. Given the comfortable foreign exchange reserves position, India's current trade deficit is within manageable limits.

Setting up of Industries in Nepal by Indian entrepreneurs

1377. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:
MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Nepal has made an offer to the Indian extrepreneurs to set up industries in Nepal;

(b) if so, the sectors in which offer has been made;

(c) .whether any agreement jn this

Damage to Foodgrains in FCI Godowns

1378. DR. RANBIR SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether foodgrains worth Rs.'100 crore have been rendered useless for human consumption over the last two years and the same cannot even be used for fodder purposes as has been brought

qu*- in the news-item appeared in the Hindustan Times of 26th July, 1995 under the caption "Storing grain on airstrip the FCI way";

(b) if so, the extent to which the news report is correct and what action Government propose to take to save the foodgrains from getting damaged; and

(c) what are the other points that have been brought out in the news item and what is the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) It is not correct that foodgrains, worth Rs. 100 crore has been rendered useless for human consumption during the last two years in Punjab as per news item of the "The Hindustan Times" dated 26.7.95. The total quantities declared as damaged due to various reasons in Punjab for the last two years are as under:—

Year	Quantity (MTs)	Values (Rs.)
1993-94	25,663.333	9,66,79,215.72'
1992-93	1,899.239	60,84,347.41

(*The damaged during this year was due to unprecedented floods)

The damaged foodgrains are categorised on the basis of sound grains into various categories such as cattle feed, Poultry feed, Industrial/manure use etc. and disposed off accordingly. It is not correct to say that all damaged foodgrains available with FCI are not fit for fodder use. Due to paucity of covered godowns, stocks are kept in open under CAP (Cover & Plinth) as purely temporary measure. The stocks under CAP are well protected with polythene covers and other accessories to avoid any damage due to rains. The FCI has been successful in storing foodgrains under CAP without any appreciable damage to foodgrains except due to natural calamities.

(c) (i) It is an internationally accepted practice to store foodgrains under CAP protected with polythene covers, cover tops and nets on raised plinths or on wooden crates. With expertise in the field, stocks in open can be preserved for a short period without any deterioration except for natural calamities.

(ii) The stocks of paddy are purchased as per the uniform specifications of the Government of India. The same are issued to the rice millers for custom milling as per the terms of contract mutually agreed upon. AH out efforts are made to liquidate huge quantity of paddy available in Punjab by custom milling/diposal through open tender/movement to other States for milling.

(iii) Due to availability of foodgrains in plenty in the open markets, the offtake through PDS has considerably comedown resulting in huge accumulation of foodgrains with FCI. Efforts are made to expedite movement to other needy States and disposal through open tender wherever possible.

Centrally Sponsored Cheap Rice Scheme

1379. SHRI SARDA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the states where centrally sponsored cheap rice scheme is being implemented;

(b) whether it has been introduced in every State; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to oversee the proper distribution of rice under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) to (c) The Central Government has not sponsored cheap rice scheme in any State/UT. However, under the Public Distribution System (PDS) the Central Government makes bulk allocation of foodgrains to all States/ UTs at subsidised Central Issue Prices (CIP) which are uniform for all States/ UTs. The foodgrains meant for distribution in the Blocks identified for im-